

U.S. Department of Justice

Washington, DC 20530

Supplemental Statement**Pursuant to the Foreign Agents Registration Act of
1938, as amended**For Six Month Period Ending 9/30/14

(Insert date)

I - REGISTRANT

1. (a) Name of Registrant

(b) Registration No.

The Tool Shed Group LLC (TSG, LLC)

5916

(c) Business Address(es) of Registrant

19528 Ventura Boulevard, #495
Tarzana, CA 91356

2. Has there been a change in the information previously furnished in connection with the following?

(a) If an individual:

(1) Residence address(es) Yes ☐ No ☐(2) Citizenship Yes ☐ No ☐(3) Occupation Yes ☐ No ☐

(b) If an organization:

(1) Name Yes ☐ No ☒(2) Ownership or control Yes ☐ No ☒(3) Branch offices Yes ☐ No ☒

(c) Explain fully all changes, if any, indicated in Items (a) and (b) above.

N/A

IF THE REGISTRANT IS AN INDIVIDUAL, OMIT RESPONSE TO ITEMS 3, 4, AND 5(a).3. If you have previously filed Exhibit C¹, state whether any changes therein have occurred during this 6 month reporting period.Yes ☐ No ☒If yes, have you filed an amendment to the Exhibit C? Yes ☐ No ☒

If no, please attach the required amendment.

¹ The Exhibit C, for which no printed form is provided, consists of a true copy of the charter, articles of incorporation, association, and by laws of a registrant that is an organization. (A waiver of the requirement to file an Exhibit C may be obtained for good cause upon written application to the Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.)

4. (a) Have any persons ceased acting as partners, officers, directors or similar officials of the registrant during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position	Date Connection Ended
N/A		

(b) Have any persons become partners, officers, directors or similar officials during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Residence Address	Citizenship	Position	Date Assumed
N/A				

5. (a) Has any person named in Item 4(b) rendered services directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, identify each such person and describe the service rendered.

N/A

(b) During this six month reporting period, has the registrant hired as employees or in any other capacity, any persons who rendered or will render services to the registrant directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal(s) in other than a clerical or secretarial, or in a related or similar capacity? Yes ☐ No ☒

Name	Residence Address	Citizenship	Position	Date Assumed
N/A				

(c) Have any employees or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their employment or connection with the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position or Connection	Date Terminated
N/A		

(d) Have any employees or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their connection with any foreign principal during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position or Connection	Foreign Principal	Date Terminated
N/A			

6. Have short form registration statements been filed by all of the persons named in Items 5(a) and 5(b) of the supplemental statement?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, list names of persons who have not filed the required statement.

N/A

II - FOREIGN PRINCIPAL

7. Has your connection with any foreign principal ended during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Foreign Principal

Date of Termination

N/A

8. Have you acquired any new foreign principal(s)² during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name and Address of Foreign Principal(s)

Date Acquired

N/A

9. In addition to those named in Items 7 and 8, if any, list foreign principal(s)² whom you continued to represent during the 6 month reporting period.

Consulate General of the Republic of Azerbaijan/Embassy of Azerbaijan

10. (a) Have you filed exhibits for the newly acquired foreign principal(s), if any, listed in Item 8?

Exhibit A³ Yes ☐ No ☒

Exhibit B⁴ Yes ☐ No ☒

If no, please attach the required exhibit.

- (b) Have there been any changes in the Exhibits A and B previously filed for any foreign principal whom you represented during this six month period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have you filed an amendment to these exhibits? Yes ☐ No ☒

If no, please attach the required amendment.

² The term "foreign principal" includes, in addition to those defined in Section 1(b) of the Act, an individual organization any of whose activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidized in whole or in major part by a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign organization or foreign individual. (See Rule 100(a)(9)). A registrant who represents more than one foreign principal is required to list in the statements he files under the Act only those principals for whom he is not entitled to claim exemption under Section 3 of the Act. (See Rule 208.)

³ The Exhibit A, which is filed on Form NSD-3, sets forth the information required to be disclosed concerning each foreign principal.

⁴ The Exhibit B, which is filed on Form NSD-4, sets forth the information concerning the agreement or understanding between the registrant and the foreign principal.

III - ACTIVITIES

11. During this 6 month reporting period, have you engaged in any activities for or rendered any services to any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each foreign principal and describe in full detail your activities and services:

Consulate General of the Republic of Azerbaijan/Embassy of Azerbaijan: Provided strategic counsel with respect to government relations with the United States; wrote op-ed pieces for news sources.

12. During this 6 month reporting period, have you on behalf of any foreign principal engaged in political activity⁵ as defined below? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail all such political activity, indicating, among other things, the relations, interests and policies sought to be influenced and the means employed to achieve this purpose. If the registrant arranged, sponsored or delivered speeches, lectures or radio and TV broadcasts, give details as to dates, places of delivery, names of speakers and subject matter.

Grass-roots efforts via op-ed articles only; no direct contact with U.S. Government officials;

13. In addition to the above described activities, if any, have you engaged in activity on your own behalf which benefits your foreign principal(s)? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, describe fully.

⁵ "Political activity," as defined in Section 1(o) of the Act, means any activity that the person engaging in believes will, or that the person intends to, in any way influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.

IV - FINANCIAL INFORMATION**14. (a) RECEIPTS-MONIES**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal, any contributions, income or money either as compensation or otherwise? Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, explain why.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies.⁶

Date	From Whom	Purpose	Amount
April 2014	Embassy of Azerbaijan	Foreign Relations Advice & op-eds	\$5,600.00
May 2014	Embassy of Azerbaijan	Foreign Relations Advice & op-eds	\$5,300.00
June 2014	Embassy of Azerbaijan	Foreign Relations Advice & op-eds	\$5,300.00
July 2014	Embassy of Azerbaijan	Foreign Relations Advice & op-eds	\$2,800.00
August 2014	Embassy of Azerbaijan	Foreign Relations Advice & op-eds	\$0.00
September 2014	Embassy of Azerbaijan	Foreign Relations Advice & op-eds	\$11,200.00

\$30,200.00

Total

(b) RECEIPTS - FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received, as part of a fundraising campaign⁷, any money on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have you filed an Exhibit D⁸ to your registration? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, indicate the date the Exhibit D was filed. Date N/A

(c) RECEIPTS-THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received any thing of value⁹ other than money from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Foreign Principal	Date Received	Thing of Value	Purpose
N/A			

6, 7 A registrant is required to file an Exhibit D if he collects or receives contributions, loans, moneys, or other things of value for a foreign principal, as part of a fundraising campaign. (See Rule 201(e)).

8 An Exhibit D, for which no printed form is provided, sets forth an account of money collected or received as a result of a fundraising campaign and transmitted for a foreign principal.

9 Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks," and the like.

15. (a) DISBURSEMENTS-MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you

(1) disbursed or expended monies in connection with activity on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes ☐ No ☒(2) transmitted monies to any such foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☒

If no, explain in full detail why there were no disbursements made on behalf of any foreign principal.

N/A

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies, including monies transmitted, if any, to each foreign principal.

Date	To Whom	Purpose	Amount
N/A			

N/A

Total

(b) DISBURSEMENTS-THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you disposed of anything of value¹⁰ other than money in furtherance of or in connection with activities on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date	Recipient	Foreign Principal	Thing of Value	Purpose
N/A				

(c) DISBURSEMENTS-POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

During this 6 month reporting period, have you from your own funds and on your own behalf either directly or through any other person, made any contributions of money or other things of value¹¹ in connection with an election to any political office, or in connection with any primary election, convention, or caucus held to select candidates for political office?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date	Amount or Thing of Value	Political Organization or Candidate	Location of Event
N/A			

10, 11 Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks," and the like.

V - INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

16. (a) During this 6 month reporting period, did you prepare, disseminate or cause to be disseminated any informational materials?¹²

Yes ☒ No ☐

If Yes, go to Item 17.

(b) If you answered No to Item 16(a), do you disseminate any material in connection with your registration?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, please forward the materials disseminated during the six month period to the Registration Unit for review.

17. Identify each such foreign principal.

Consulate General of the Republic of Azerbaijan/Embassy of Azerbaijan:

18. During this 6 month reporting period, has any foreign principal established a budget or allocated a specified sum of money to finance your activities in preparing or disseminating informational materials? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal, specify amount, and indicate for what period of time.

Consulate General of the Republic of Azerbaijan/Embassy of Azerbaijan - Payments per piece/spec payments/hourly rate.

19. During this 6 month reporting period, did your activities in preparing, disseminating or causing the dissemination of informational materials include the use of any of the following:

- ☐ Radio or TV broadcasts ☒ Magazine or newspaper ☐ Motion picture films ☐ Letters or telegrams
☐ Advertising campaigns ☐ Press releases ☐ Pamphlets or other publications ☐ Lectures or speeches
☐ Other (specify) _____

Electronic Communications

- ☐ Email
☐ Website URL(s): _____
☐ Social media websites URL(s): _____
☐ Other (specify) _____

20. During this 6 month reporting period, did you disseminate or cause to be disseminated informational materials among any of the following groups:

- ☐ Public officials ☒ Newspapers ☐ Libraries
☐ Legislators ☒ Editors ☐ Educational institutions
☐ Government agencies ☐ Civic groups or associations ☐ Nationality groups
☐ Other (specify) _____

21. What language was used in the informational materials:

- ☒ English ☒ Other (specify) Spanish for LA Opinion

22. Did you file with the Registration Unit, U.S. Department of Justice a copy of each item of such informational materials disseminated or caused to be disseminated during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☒ No ☐

23. Did you label each item of such informational materials with the statement required by Section 4(b) of the Act?

Yes ☒ No ☐

¹² The term informational materials includes any oral, visual, graphic, written, or pictorial information or matter of any kind, including that published by means of advertising, books, periodicals, newspapers, lectures, broadcasts, motion pictures, or any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or otherwise. Informational materials disseminated by an agent of a foreign principal as part of an activity in itself exempt from registration, or an activity which by itself would not require registration, need not be filed pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Act.

VI - EXECUTION

In accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1746, the undersigned swear(s) or affirm(s) under penalty of perjury that he/she has (they have) read the information set forth in this registration statement and the attached exhibits and that he/she is (they are) familiar with the contents thereof and that such contents are in their entirety true and accurate to the best of his/her (their) knowledge and belief, except that the undersigned make(s) no representation as to truth or accuracy of the information contained in the attached Short Form Registration Statement(s), if any, insofar as such information is not within his/her (their) personal knowledge.

(Date of signature)

(Print or type name under each signature or provide electronic signature¹³)October 29, 2014/s/ Jason KatzeSigned

¹³ This statement shall be signed by the individual agent, if the registrant is an individual, or by a majority of those partners, officers, directors or persons performing similar functions, if the registrant is an organization, except that the organization can, by power of attorney, authorize one or more individuals to execute this statement on its behalf.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it: Grimm situations may occur

Americans have a funny penchant for "fix'in things that ain't broke." American voters, in particular, really like to "fix" things. We regularly vote elected officials out of office who are doing a fine job in favor of someone else who seems newer and shinier only to find later that we have chosen badly and have to live with the grim results.

Case in point is embattled New York Congressman Michael Grimm. In 2010, Grimm defeated Congressman Michael McMahon, although McMahon seems to have served his constituents and the U.S. with a pretty good degree of distinction, even becoming a noteworthy expert and leader in the realm of international affairs. We are now hearing from law enforcement and judicial officials that Grimm was elected with a significant amount of help from special interests, ones we are only now learning are not exactly above board and do not have the best interests of the U.S. in mind.

Grimm's missteps have not been limited to his restaurant dealings for which he has been indicted on twenty counts in federal court or his suspect campaign fundraising, which remains under grand jury review.

During his tenure in the House of Representatives, Grimm's forays into foreign policy have raised more than a few eyebrows within the Beltway and beyond. His one man visit to the cell of convicted spy Jonathan Pollard, his co-chairmanship of the Armenian Caucus, his active part in the infamous Sea of Galilee skinny dipping delegation (there is an unpleasant visual for you) or his co-founding of a pro-Russia caucus in the House; all show a lack of restraint and appreciation of world events and the American national interest.

Interestingly, Grimm was elected with the significant support and help of the Armenian community in the U.S., again, now under investigation. Truth be told, this community disliked McMahon because he was a supporter of NATO member and long time U.S. ally, Turkey. In addition, McMahon was a supporter of the former Soviet republic, Azerbaijan, a staunch and reliable supporter of the U.S. and the West and one of the U.S.'s few secular, moderate, progressive, majority-Muslim friends...not to mention an enormous source of gas and oil to Western markets bypassing Russia and Iran...and a close ally of Israel, too, providing about 45% of Israel's oil.

In Grimm, NY elected and America got a fellow who co-chairs the Armenian Caucus, yes that Armenia, the vassal state of Russia, complete with Russian military border and airspace regulation, and the one who supports and thanks Iran for its support and the one who supports Russian expansionism in the UN against the U.S. NY and America also got the co-chairman of the U.S.-Russia Economic Relations Caucus, yes that Russia, the one that is gallivanting all over the former Soviet Union invading sovereign nations in a neo-imperialistic effort to rebuild Russian hegemony...and, by the way, the caucus that has made no statements or proclamations as our friend, Ukraine, is being torn apart.

So, voters and Americans, we seem to have traded a seemingly above board expert, who seems to have had the best interests of the U.S. and his constituents in mind, for a Congressman who is willing to shill in favor of special interests that are decidedly not friends of the U.S.

Again, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Perhaps NY voters can draft McMahon back into office?

Jason Katz is the principal of the Tool Shed Group, LLC, a consultancy that advises foreign governments, NGOs and corporations in the realms of strategic communications, politics and policy. He is also the former head of Public Affairs and Public Relations for the American Jewish Committee, based in Los Angeles.

America's lack of leadership is feeding global instability

The growth of global instability and volatility is undeniable, so is the need for America's leadership. However, the problem is not just lack of leadership, but an apparent confusion about actual policies that leadership necessitates. Actions by a superpower (the U.S. *is* still a superpower) should be realistic, strategic, as well as interest and objective driven.

Introduction of elections in Gaza, for instance, produced a terrorist Hamas authority, which repeatedly attacked Israel and, caused death and destruction amongst their own people. Egypt is another example...the radical and bloody Muslim Brotherhood was brought to power by an election.

Some would argue that voting freely is more important than anything else, while forgetting that security and peace are necessary for that, not to mention that the voters need to be alive.

Similarly, America's expedited withdrawal from Iraq, half-hearted (some would say half-witted) actions in Syria, half measured responses to ISIL, and decisive but somewhat pointless intervention in Libya helped deepen divisions and add fuel to civil wars. Should U.S. abandon Afghanistan, again when the outcome is just as predictable?

Strangely, the U.S makes little distinction between a friend and a foe. Note the increasingly comfortable relationship between Washington and Teheran, this against the background of the former's conspicuous tension with Israel. If there is one lesson the Administration can learn from its one time buddy Turkish PM Erdogan is that his policy of "zero problems with neighbors" ended up with having zero neighbors without problems.

After the 2008 war in Georgia, Washington's insistence on the "reset" policy was seen as a sign of weakness by the Russians, both because of different political mentalities and because it was hard to see it otherwise.

Also puzzling is Washington's reluctance to engage with actual allies. One example is Azerbaijan, the key player in the fragile geopolitical equilibrium in Eurasia. This fiercely independent country's choice of partners in the currently fluid situation may determine the future of the region. Squeezed by Iran and Russia, Azerbaijan is the nation Georgia depends upon economically, the main westward energy transit route for energy-rich Central Asia and an imperative political partner to all. In this line up of realpolitik posturing, one absentee is the United States.

Seemingly having learned nothing from the debauchery of the "Arab Spring," Washington is too eager to criticize Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani authorities, no doubt, can be overzealous and the opposition should be treated better. However, even with all its faults, Azerbaijan is scolded more than others much faultier. A good portion of this stems from Armenian activists, who are eager to emphasize Azerbaijan's flaws rather than the spectacular failure of Armenia's statehood. It is hard to see how Armenia can be characterized as an independent state when it is clear that it has evolved to become a vassal state of the Russia and a close ally of Iran.

These activists are the same people who push for a second Armenian state, also destined to fail. This one in Azerbaijan's Nagorno Karabakh region, internationally recognized as Azerbaijan and illegally occupied by Armenia.

Negativity gets ratings. From personal attacks to constant and bitter criticism, U.S. tax payer-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFERL) is the champion. Similar to Russia Today's (Russian's very polished and high tech propaganda machine) view of the United States, RFERL sees little that is positive about Azerbaijan. Journalists pursuing an agenda may be understandable. Why this should transpire at tax payer expense to the detriment of U.S. interests is not understandable.

Unlike Russia Today, which has a clear anti-American mandate, and Al-Jazeera, which covers up Qatari dirty dealings with radicals, RFERL has lost its focus and, depending on the preferences of its language services, purposefully undermines America's relations with other nations.

Ironically, those criticizing foreign governments for spending money on lobbying to promote stronger ties with U.S. never ask a logical question... why do the tax-payers spend millions on a major organization in Prague and hire hundreds of foreigners with expat allowances to challenge governments, which are often friendly to us? One may argue that an independent media is a pillar of democracy. Of course, and media freedom throughout Eurasia remains a problem. But the paradox is that neither RFERL nor Russia Today are independent.

Perhaps, we should break the recent habit of tactical superficiality and conveniently myopic vision, which is harming America's prestige and costing lives worldwide, and return to what has made the U.S. the world's only superpower – strategic and responsible global leadership.

Jason Katz is the principal of TSG, LLC, a consultancy that advises foreign governments, NGOs and corporations in the realms of strategic communications, politics and policy. He is also the former head of Public Affairs and Public Relations for the American Jewish Committee, based in Los Angeles.

America's confused foreign policy in the post-Soviet sphere

As the tragedy of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 showed, one needs to look no further than the pro-Russian Ukrainian separatists' own Facebook pages to identify the culprits of these murders and the supporters empowering them. The separatists' social media posts can be very revealing, from celebrating hitting civilian targets to showing off the victims' personal belongings stolen from the crash site. It shouldn't come as a surprise then that the infamous and equally grotesque Russian-intelligence-officer-turned-separatist-leader, Igor Girkin, uses his Facebook presence to support recent Armenian attacks on U.S. ally Azerbaijan, while another prominent militant, Valery Bolotov, discloses that he criminally fought alongside Armenian separatists against Azerbaijan in the 1990s.

It seems that the logic and the tactics of all separatist conflicts in the post-Soviet space are the same and that their main objective is to undermine the sustainable and independent development of the pro-Western nations of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Could this be in Russia's best interests, as it rides its neo-Imperialistic resurgence unchecked by a weak U.S. Administration unwilling to stand up for its allies? It is suspect that in recent days, just as violence escalates in Eastern Ukraine, Armenian forces launched a massive attack on Azerbaijan, an attack few would doubt originated from Moscow.

Looking at a map of Eurasia makes one thing clear: being a friend of the United States comes at a high price, specifically to those with occupied territories, while Russian vassal states, such as Armenia, enjoy relative protection. Armenia is unique because despite its clearly anti-Western policies, it still enjoys political support in Washington and is a top recipient of American aid per capita. Armenia, having de facto lost its independence to Russia, has cozied up to Iran for decades (lest we forget that it was Armenia that transferred European arms to Iran, who in turn gave them to Iraqi insurgents who killed Americans with them), continues to host Russian military bases and even has its airspace and borders patrolled by the Russian military. What's more, Armenia voted with only a handful of other rogue states at the UN against the territorial integrity of Ukraine (a vote championed by U.S.).

Armenian leaders are so confident in their ability to be simultaneously the darling of the U.S., Iran and Russia that they are not very shy about it; for instance, Armenian President Serj Sarkissian was among a very few leaders who, just this year, congratulated Syria's Bashar al-Assad on his "reelection" and appointed a Russian citizen, a Moscow-based oligarch, as Armenia's Consul General to Los Angeles.

And what is Washington's response to all the developments in the region? Thankfully, there has been some supportive rhetoric for Ukraine (and, of course, some meals-ready-to-eat-MREs), yet not an equally strong endorsement of another strategic and reliable ally, Azerbaijan. In an illogical twist, Washington imposes sanctions on Russia -- but instead of applying the same to Armenia, the United States remains the only nation in the world providing direct assistance to Armenian separatists in Nagorno Karabakh. Washington seems to have developed an imperative to engage when it is too late, if at all, in reaction to Moscow's assertive actions and has excelled in sending mixed messages. Azerbaijan is arguably the most pivotal nation in Eurasia today. It is a key transit point for NATO operations in Afghanistan, the only nation bordering both Russia and Iran, and one of the very few secular and tolerant Muslim societies in the world.

Yet instead of intensively reaching out to Azerbaijan, Washington constantly criticizes or alternately ignores Baku.

In contrast to Russia and Iran, which both frequently send top level delegations to convince Baku to turn away from its pro-Western course, Washington has been MIA, with Hillary Clinton being the last high-level Administration official visiting in 2012. Compare this to the Moscow: Putin personally visited Baku just before the presidential elections in 2013 to court Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev. Now consider this through the prism of regional perceptions and the global outcry about the lack of American leadership.

Failing to offer a credible security commitment to their allies in the post-Soviet space, the United States and Europe are unable to address their most immediate and present threats. Offering some vague European prospects peppered by heavy criticism and diluted by the constant bickering and lack of leadership among the Europeans, the West comes across as weak in the face of Russia's decisive, instant and brutal force. The much touted EU Association agreement doesn't even offer clear support to Azerbaijan for its territorial integrity, unlike the other candidates. This is a sign of strategic confusion in the European ranks.

Europe's energy security is a major geopolitical concern as vividly demonstrated by the disunity among the Continent's leaders in the wake of Russian attacks in Ukraine in 2014 and in Georgia in 2008. Therefore, developing alternative supplies of natural gas should logically become the top priority. However, the combined Western efforts to advance the Southern Gas Corridor, the only shovel-ready project for delivery of the Caspian gas from Azerbaijan's Shah-Deniz field to European markets, are weak at best.

Finally, as the example of pro-Russian separatists and even of the fanatics of ISIL in Iraq have shown, not everyone who masters Facebook or Twitter is our friend or a believer in democracy. From the Middle East to the post-Soviet space, these are trying days for the world. The United States needs to show leadership by identifying and supporting its friends, while dealing effectively with its opponents. Otherwise, the U.S. just continues to appear weak on the world stage and, some would say, a declining power.

Jason Katz is the principal of TSG, LLC, a consultancy that advises foreign governments, NGOs and corporations in the realms of strategic communications, politics and policy. He is also the former head of Public Affairs and Public Relations for the American Jewish Committee, based in Los Angeles.

Prioridades legislativas de California: empleo, el agua, la inmigración, la economía y la POLÍTICA EXTERIOR?

El viaje de Los Ángeles a través del Valle de San Joaquín y seguido hasta Yosemite últimamente es aterradorante. El Valle es repleto de cosechas muertas y agonizantes, hasta los acres de los árboles frutales muertos y desconcertados. Para conducir el choque a casa eran las súplicas de signos casi ubicuas suplicando, "Ninguna agua, ningunos trabajos".

Es abundantemente claro que California está en medio de una sequía. Esto junto a la recuperación económica del estado (restableciéndose en gran parte porque California eligió a un gobernador que sabe decirle "no" a la legislatura gastosa) graves problemas de inmigración, la falta de puestos de trabajo, etc. presenta una imagen bastante inquietante y ominosa para la gente del estado. California aún sigue en malas condiciones.

Pero mientras la legislatura titubea en movimiento hacia adelante proyectos diseñados para abordar al menos las consecuencias de la sequía, así como todos los otros asuntos muy apremiantes de California, ha hecho un desvío bastante extraño y consciente del negocio del estado para tomar el desarrollo de la política exterior de los Estados Unidos. Y contrario a los intereses de los Estados Unidos en aquel.

Comenzando a principios de este año, el asambleísta Mike Gatto escribió y defendió Resolución de la Asamblea Conjunta 32 (AJR 32), una resolución que pedía el reconocimiento de la "República de Nagorno Karabaj". En ninguna parte de la Constitución de California o la de los Estados Unidos es la Legislatura de California implícitamente o explícitamente autorizada para llevar a cabo la política exterior de la nación. En realidad, los redactores de la Constitución de Estados Unidos proporcionan ese poder en el Ejecutivo Federal.

Mientras AJR 32 paso en la Asamblea, muchos miembros supuestamente confesaron que ni siquiera sabían exactamente lo que estaban votando y que votaron sí como una forma de "ir a lo largo para llevarse bien". Avance rápido y mucho más estadistas cabezas prevalecieron. Entonces Presidente del Senado Pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg ya entendía lo absurdo de la incursión de la legislatura en una esfera de asuntos exteriores, un ámbito en el cual no era calificado y que no pertenecía. AJR 32 debía haber muerto una muerte tranquila,

sin tocar en el Comité de reglas del Senado. A la última hora, el nuevo y no presidente tan sabio y decididamente no propio de estadista Pro Tempore, Kevin de Leon, literalmente camino la resolución hasta el suelo de la Comité de Reglamentos del Senado, presiono por ella y paso. No parecía importarle a senador de León que estaba pisando donde él no tenía derecho. En el momento cuando todo el mundo liderado por los Estados Unidos opone vocalmente la ocupación rusa liderado por Presidente ruso Vladimir Putin en Crimea y el apoyo abierto del separatismo a favor ruso en Ucrania, el Senado dio un respaldo moral a los separatistas apoyados por Rusia en Nagorno Karabaj y en otros lugares.

Se entiende que las legislaturas estatales, así como los consejos de gobierno de los municipios, etc pasan el certificado o resolución de vez en cuando en honor a esto o aquello. Pero esto es un ejemplo ostensible de la intromisión en la política exterior estadounidense, pasando tiempo y recursos del contribuyente, ya que los miembros de la Legislatura de California abdicaron sus responsabilidades de representar y ocuparse de los asuntos y negocios de sus distritos y el estado.

¿Por qué hace la Legislatura de California esta incursión en asuntos exteriores? ¿Por qué los miembros de la Legislatura les resulta tan importante gastar tiempo y dinero contribuyente intentando pasar AJR 32? ¿Podría ser que Nagorno Karabaj es una cuestión favorita de la comunidad Armenio-americana, la misma comunidad que da tan generosamente a las campañas de tales como el Sr. Gatto y el Sr. de León? Una comprobación somera de registros de finanzas y reuniones de campaña fácilmente responderá a esa pregunta.

De por sí, no hay nada malo con el apoyo de los candidatos que llevan el agua, como el que dice, en los respectivos temas. Es la forma en que se juega la política estadounidense. El problema viene cuando los funcionarios electos son engañados por un interés especial o dicho funcionarios electos son demasiado perezosos para hacer diligencias debida y aprender si lo que les están pidiendo hacer es incluso legal o pertinente.

La realidad es que Nagorno Karabaj es una región internacionalmente reconocida de la República de Azerbaiyán. Fue ocupado por los militares armenios con la ayuda del ejército soviético durante la caída de la Unión Soviética. Sí, hoy en día, sólo los armenios viven allí, pero esto es una consecuencia directa del hecho de que los ejércitos rusos y armenios asesinaron

o expulsaron de los azerbaiyanos de Nagorno Karabaj y la zona circundante. Ahora viven como desplazados en Azerbaiyán. ¿Es esto qué nuestros senadores quieren respaldar?

Es comprensible por qué Armenia, representada en California por un Cónsul General, quien es un ciudadano ruso y un oligarca moscovita, sería partidario de promover la agenda Kremlin de apoyar el separatismo en Azerbaiyán, Georgia, Moldova y Ucrania. Está menos claro por qué California debe seguir y apoyar esa insensatez. Para empeorar las cosas para el Sr. de León y el Sr. Gatto y a los miembros de la Legislatura de California que tan incompetentemente votaron por AJR 32 es que esto es el récord histórico y que nadie, no los Estados Unidos, la Union Europea, las Naciones Unidas, ni siquiera Armenia reconocen Nagorno Karabaj como una nación. ¿Cómo es eso de pisar una mina antipersonal política para los donantes de sus campañas?

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